

Blessed John Baptist de la Salle

"I bless this work (the Brothers' Novitiate of Baltimore) with all my heart, and hope that the Rev. Clergy will exercise their solicitude in encouraging vocations to the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools." *H. E. Cardinal Gibbons.*

To this may be added the lines written by the Most Rev. Archbishop of New York, when directing the See of Newark: "I beg to recommend to you the fostering of vocations for this admirable Institution from which so many benefits accrue to youth, and from which, if vocations be multiplied, we may hope so much more in future for the welfare of religion."


His Eminence the late Cardinal Archbishop of New York wrote:

"As it may often be in the power of pastors or confessors to foster and encourage vocations to a life so eminently useful and meritorious as is that of the Christian Brothers, or to recommend fitting subjects for their Novitiate, I am induced to solicit the aid of their influence in this direction, that thus the religious training and education of Catholic children may be more effectually promoted and secured."

*Cardinal McCloskey.*

Thus wrote the illustrious Archbishop Spalding: "I beg to enlist your zeal in behalf of the Christian Brothers, who are doing so much towards advancing the cause of Catholic education in this country. As the sphere of their action extends, they necessarily need a large increase in their numbers. Hence I invite you to take an interest in finding suitable candidates for their Novitiate."

The Most Rev. Archbishop Wood, during whose administration so many schools and communities of Christian Brothers were opened, wrote: "You will thus, by securing vocations, greatly advance the interests of religion and education," since, says the Cardinal Archbishop of Malines (Belgium), "the Brothers have never been so much needed as at present."



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A BRIEF SKETCH

— OF —

BLESSED JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE,

FOUNDER OF THE

BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS:

WITH

AN EXPLANATION OF HIS INSTITUTE.

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1889

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The explanation of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools has been drawn up by the authority of the proper Superiors.

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## BLESSED JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE :

FOUNDER OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS.

Born 30 April, 1651, died 7 April, 1719, beatified 19 February, 1888.

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THE gentle yet dignified figure that, fresh from the honors of beatification, holds forth to our gaze the "Rules and Constitutions of the Brothers of the Christian Schools," is worthy of more than passing notice.

Regularly, when a Saint is newly raised to the altars, special graces of help are granted to his intercession, and there is a special blessing on every effort to make known his life and to lead others to imitate it. This is in the Providence of God, Who through the Saints leads us to the perfect following of Christ Whom they have known—*Whom to know is eternal life.*<sup>1</sup>

But there are certain very special reasons of fitness why the life of Blessed de la Salle should be dwelt upon in our day.

First, he had caught up the true fire of the love of the Heart of Jesus—he had learned to live, not for self, but for God and his neighbor.

Again, his life is a striking example of devotedness in following out the work which Providence set before him, in spite of difficulties and rebuffs from without and of natural repugnance within himself. The Church is as full to-day as then of works that demand the giving up of life itself to them in utter devotedness. Perhaps more may follow the vocation divinely given them, if they meditate a little on this holy life.

Finally, the special work founded by Blessed de la Salle has spread over the whole world and is doing untold good in our midst. It is bound up with some of the most stirring questions of the times, and it can nowhere be so well and completely studied as in the ideals and the holy practice of its Blessed Founder.

<sup>1</sup> St. John, xvii. 3.



## PART FIRST.

### I. PREPARATION.

John Baptist de la Salle was born and baptized on the 30th of April, in the year 1651. His father held an honorable position among the magistrates of the city of Rheims. The house in which he lived still remains, and shows by its ornamented front, with its niches for statues and the turrets for the winding staircase, that the new Christian was born with both honors and fortune in his possession. The world smiled on him from the beginning of his unworldly life.

The family De la Salle was of the old stamp of Christianity. Of the seven children, beginning with John Baptist the eldest, four consecrated themselves to God in the Church.

The young boy early showed a disposition to piety, which was fostered by his surroundings. His grandfather, according to a custom of the pious laymen of the time, said the breviary each day like a priest. His grandmother read to him the heroic deeds in the lives of the Saints. On account of his precocious piety, it was decided that the young boy, in spite of his being the eldest son and therefore expected to follow in the footsteps of his father, should become a priest. So in his first schooldays, at the age of eleven years, he received the tonsure; and before he was sixteen he was named to a canonry in the cathedral of his native city. This was a considerable benefice, and was sufficient to provide amply and richly for all the needs of a life to be spent among the great of this world.

The aged canon, who had resigned in his favor, had not, however, such ideas of the positions of honor and emolument in the Church of God. He had been determined to his act by his knowledge of the young man's sincere piety. He said to him: "Little cousin, remember that a canon should be like a Carthusian, and lead a life of solitude and retirement." There was to be little enough outward solitude and retirement in this life just beginning among honors and riches. But there would be a solitude of the heart in the throng of men who would



never fully understand the work to which this life should be devoted, while the retirement of the heart—away from men with God—would become continual. How else could the burden of such a life be borne!

At the age of eighteen, John Baptist de la Salle, Canon of the cathedral of Rheims, had finished his general studies and received the degree of Master of Arts. He was now ready for the special studies of his calling. For this he went to Paris to the Seminary of St. Sulpice, known to-day as then for being a centre of true ecclesiastical life, where piety and zeal learn a calm and regular movement onward according to rule. For, says St. Augustine,—*Who lives by rule, lives for God.*

The Sulpician Fathers, whose vocation for the training of priests is not less singular and well defined than was the far different vocation of their pupil, are sober in praise of their students. Of the Blessed de la Salle we find this written by the Director: "He was from the first a faithful observer of the rule and exact in the exercises of the community. Soon after entering among us, he seemed to withdraw more from the world than before. His conversation was always mild and dignified. To me he seemed never to displease anyone, or to draw down on himself any reproach."

He had already learned the need of mortification and penance for leading a truly Christian life in the world. His bed was hard, his whole life was self-denying. God now drew near to try him. His mother died, and then a few months later his respected father. He was obliged to return home to take charge of the family, of which he now became the head. He had spent less than two years in the Sulpician Seminary; but it was enough to have fully learned the lessons taught there of detachment and perseverance in orderly well-doing for the love of Christ.

He had also been taught to think of the crying needs of the souls of men around him, and to apply at least one remedy to their sore distress. An association of prayer had lately spread throughout France, and been introduced in the great seminary, in order to obtain through the intercession of St. Joseph some means of instructing the common people of the country. These had long been left in the greatest ignorance, especially of religion. It was the sowing of the harvest which was to be reaped a century later in the French Revolution.

It is true the state of society had much that was brilliant and solid. The aristocracy were becoming dissolute through the example of the Court; but the magistracy was of unimpeachable honor, and the middle classes regularly joined to an easy condition of life great integrity based on the everyday practice of their religion. But the poor—the peasants in country hamlets, and, worse still, the laborers of the towns and cities—were like sheep left without a pastor. The clergy were unable to be the teachers of the young children of their parishes, and the laymen in this profession were often only grasping after their salaries, and yet oftener incompetent. The State laws, by their restriction of the teaching profession to certain licensed individuals, also came in to make the work of instructing the poor more difficult. The modern mania for education by the State was unknown. It was not until the Church put her own hand valiantly to the work, that the necessity of the State's interference was discovered. Before that the State had been quite content that whole populations should pass their lives in the most depressing and un-Christian ignorance!

But the young De la Salle had as yet no idea of any special work to which he was called by God. He prayed for the ignorant just as he wore hairshirts and fasted, because his was a fervent soul desiring to reach out to whatever good came before him. This disposition of following out the lines of Providence was the safeguard of his vocation, once it had clearly dawned on his mind.

On his return to Rheims, he at once set about regulating his household. His brothers and sisters were under his charge. With the ecclesiastical benefice which assured his own future, it was quite possible to remain in his family and to occupy himself honorably, and even in a thoroughly priestly manner, without ever taking upon himself any responsibility of the ministry of souls. It was now that he made his final decision to go on to holy orders, and he was soon ordained subdeacon. He was seen in the streets of his native city, always modest and recollected, charitable and helpful toward all, and he made his home a model of regularity of life. There was no apparent reason why his broad canon's hat with the rich band of purple silk around its edge should not thus announce him to his townspeople for many years to come.

Little by little, however, he was pushed into active work, which he had not foreseen and for which he had no great liking. He continued his studies of theology in the university of the city. For his spiritual director in preparing for the priesthood, he had chosen a pious canon—his colleague at the cathedral. The latter had a work on his hands. It was natural that he should interest his young friend in it. It was nothing less than an institution for the education of young girls.

A pious lady had picked up from the streets thirty little orphans. The city would not provide for them, and she did her best to do so herself. Canon Roland finally took charge of them, and gave his fortune to their needs. He was in close relations with a Minim Father—a missionary of the order of St. Francis de Paul—who also was deeply concerned for the education of the poor children of the parishes where he went to exercise his ministry of zeal. He had already begun a congregation of Sisters to take charge of such schools. Canon Roland imitated his example, and the community of the Holy Child Jesus was formed in Rheims, to care for his orphans. It was also to open free schools for the poor and to form schoolmistresses for the country villages. In vain he endeavored to obtain for this good work the needed authorization of the State. Without this it was in constant danger of being suppressed.

At last the young Canon de la Salle was ready for ordination to the priesthood. This took place on the 9th of April, 1678, just as he was completing his twenty-seventh year. Eighteen days after his ordination, his friend and director, Canon Roland, died commending to his care the continuance of the work of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus. God was thus forcing him into a new way of life, which was to lead to great results. It was not according to the mind of the new priest. His piety feared the details of business, and he had long been following a life of penance and retirement. But he was anxious to do the will of God as it came to his hands, and he bravely took the burden on himself. He little foresaw to what this service of charity and zeal, taken up at the request of his dead confessor, was to lead.

Through the influence of his friends De la Salle soon obtained the needed authorization of the Archbishop, the city, and the King, for

the work of the Sisters among poor girls. He thought his commission happily ended; but in his politeness he continued from time to time to interest himself in the welfare of the schools, with which he had thus been passingly associated. He had indeed thought of the need of similar institutions for the boys abandoned to ignorance and sin in the great cities, but it did not occur to him that the work was in any way destined for himself.

God was waiting His own time, and meanwhile leading him along the sweet ways of His Divine Providence toward a life-work from which he would perhaps have shrunk, had it been set before him without such preparation.

## II. VOCATION.

There was then living in the neighboring city of Rouen a lady of the great world, who had recently been led, almost miraculously, from a life of extreme worldliness to a life of utter abnegation of self and Christian penance. She was a relative of De la Salle. At the death of her husband, who held an influential post in the government, she found herself with an immense fortune at her disposal. She chose the most extreme poverty for herself and distributed her revenues in good works. The world declared her to have gone mad, but it was the folly of Christ.

Among the objects of her charity, what most struck her was the abandoned condition of the poor boys of the streets. The Minim Father, of whom we have spoken, had already founded the institution which attempted to provide for the girls, but the boys were left in their ignorance of things human and divine. The converted grand lady had had a great share in the foundation of Canon Roland's community. She had spoken to him of a similar establishment for boys. He welcomed the project, and on his deathbed endeavored to draw the attention of his young friend, Canon de la Salle, to the plan, but without any immediate result, as we have seen.

Meanwhile the work had been begun—hastily and without any elements of permanence—at Rouen. A man of ardent zeal, with a humor for travelling from place to place in the hasty foundation of



good works,—yet withal a great Christian—was charged with the instruction of the young lads in the Government offices, and soon after, with the apprentices and domestics of the city. He taught them to read and write, and the catechism. To this were afterwards added the elements of arithmetic—enough for the calculations of ordinary life. He also endeavored to train up other schoolmasters of the same sort. They were called Brothers, and though far different from the future Christian Brothers they showed the need of vocations to this special field. They received a moderate salary for their labor, and were bound by no vow. A revenue sufficient for the support of two free schools had been given to the establishment, and the enterprising M. Nyel constituted its director.

When the foundation at Rheims was spoken of, it was at once found quite in the humor of one so given to starting new works of piety in different places. Nyel set out with a letter from his patroness to her cousin the Canon de la Salle, and with another to the superioress of the little community of the Holy Child Jesus.

By a strange coincidence he knocked at the door of the convent at the same time as De la Salle was coming to make one of his visits of politeness. The superioress soon made the two men known to each other. Neither dreamed that the plan which they talked over would bear fruit throughout the world.

The Canon listened to the proposal for starting a free school for boys in his native city with some diffidence. He remembered the difficulty of the former foundation, and he thought there was little favor to be expected from either civil or ecclesiastical authorities. However, in accordance with his maxim not to pass lightly by any occasion of doing good, he interested himself in the arrangements enough to warn Nyel not to let his errand be known for the present, but to come and accept the hospitality of his own house until some opportunity should be found of going on with their plan.

The Canon gathered together some of his clerical friends, among whom was the prior of the Benedictine abbey near by, and presented the whole case to them for consultation. Their decision shows how trammelled were all good works at that time by the constant interfe-

rence of the State. It was decided that the school could only be begun by some one of the parish priests of the city, in his own name.

Such a priest—who had in fact long been desirous of something of the kind for the straying lambs of his flock—was found in the pastor of St. Maurice. He agreed to receive Nyel and a companion at his own table and into his own house. The annual income promised by the convert lady of Rouen was to support them. This was in 1679. It was the first of the Christian Schools; the Brothers were not long wanting.

De la Salle might well think his connection with free Christian schools was now at an end. M. Nyel still came to confer with him on the subject, but there was no question as yet of their association in a work. But good spreads, especially when it is designed to relieve so pressing a need as was this of providing for the instruction of the children of the people.

A pious lady in the parish of St. James learned of the schools of St. Maurice, and desired to use the wealth God had given her in providing similar institutions for her own parish church. Nyel, in accordance with his character, was at once on fire, and referred her to his friend the Canon de la Salle, as to one who would take the new schools under his personal protection.

The latter shook his head, but went to see the pious lady before deciding. He was anxious not to turn aside wilfully from any work that Providence might put in his way.

The good lady spoke words that pierced his very soul, so fitted were they to his own train of thought. "I must take advantage of an opportunity so favorable. Long since God put this thought into my heart, and I desire to see it realized before I die."

The pious young Canon could not withstand her entreaties. He consented to take charge of this new work also. Its benefactress died six weeks later, leaving the entire charge on his hands. He was faithful to the trust, and shortly the new school was as flourishing as the old one. M. Nyel was at its head, having been replaced at St. Maurice by other masters.

De la Salle thus found himself, almost without perceiving it, engaged in the work of founding free schools for the education of boys.

He says himself: "It was through my meeting with M. Nyel and the proposal made me by Madame de Croyère, that I began taking charge of boys' schools. I had never thought of it before in any way. This was not because the plan had not been proposed to me. Several of M. Roland's friends tried to inspire me with it. But it could not find a place in my mind, and I never had the thought of putting it into execution."

It was, indeed, no light burden which this young and wealthy priest, whose position warranted him a life of ease, was now taking on himself. His coming in and going out were to be regulated henceforward by the demands and convenience of his new community. He bore his burden faithfully, though he acknowledged later on: "I felt, in fact, great annoyance in the beginning when I had them come to my house, and this lasted two years. It seems to have been for this reason that God, Who carries on all things with wisdom and sweetness and Who does not usually force the inclinations of men, since He wished to lead me on to take the entire charge of the schools, did so almost imperceptibly and after much time, so that one undertaking led me on to another, without my foreseeing it at the beginning."

Meanwhile M. Nyel was the superior of the new community. But he was often absent on his founding expeditions, and besides was not calculated to direct teachers who needed every encouragement of piety and safeguard of a regular life, if they were to persevere long in their difficult calling. To this was added the scantiness of the resources for the work.

The compassion of the Canon was aroused, and he began giving time and money to remedy the danger. This identified him more and more with the good work, which was soon to become entirely his own. He leased a house near his home, and installed in it the masters, providing them with food from his own table. It was opened on Christmas day in the year 1879, which thus saw the beginning of the first school and community of what was soon to become the wide-spread congregation of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

Difficulties were not yet at an end. De la Salle gave the few rules necessary for putting some order in the lives of the teachers. The



hours for rising and retiring, for prayer, for the meals, were fixed, and he himself passed several hours of the day in the house. New schools were opened, with the same great success, showing the cruel need of the times.

Meanwhile, the Canon went on with his studies of theology, and in 1681 received his degree as doctor. He was then thirty years of age, and it seemed little likely that he would pass his life in the work of primary education. He says of his own thoughts at this time: "I imagined that the supervision I took of the schools and the masters, being only an exterior charge, bound me to nothing in their regard beyond providing for their subsistence and taking care that they discharged their duties with piety and diligence."

The young Canon was not aware how far his heart had become interested in the work which Providence was putting in his way. Little by little he had attached himself to the masters. They were without any experience, but he admired their good will, and his own deep piety taught him to revere in them men charged with bringing to Jesus Christ the souls of His little ones. He was anxious they should form themselves on the model of the Good Shepherd.

But his numerous occupations did not permit him to give them all the time he would have wished. As a Canon of the cathedral, he was bound to be in his stall for the solemn office during a part of the day. The rest of the time was largely taken up by his studies, his family, and his relations with society. In order to gain time for more intercourse with the little community of which he was the patron, he had them to his own table for their meals. Twice a day accordingly they came to his house. One of the masters read aloud while the others were at their simple repast, and the pious Canon gave them instructions on the duties of their state of life.

The world now took alarm. It was all very well, so long as the rich and amiable Canon merely patronized a work among the common people. But what was this intimacy he was beginning with a community of simple schoolmasters?

The tempest thus raised about him did not turn De la Salle from his well-doing. On the contrary, he lamented that he had still too little

leisure to devote to a work of whose importance he was now fully persuaded. He could not get it from his mind that God made him responsible for its future well-being.

Nyel's wandering zeal now came to push him still further on the way. A new foundation was offered in a distant city, and he set off during the Holy Week, taking it for granted the Canon would see to the community of teachers during his absence. De la Salle, in his strict conscientiousness, thought he was bound not to leave the young teachers even for a few days without supervision. So he arranged that, rising at five o'clock and hearing the Mass of six, they should come to his house for the entire day except when they were in the school, returning to their own place only after night prayers.

After a week Nyel came back from a fruitless mission. But his absence had borne fruit at home. His patron had seen the evil resulting from the irregular life of these untrained youths. He set off to Paris to consult the Minim Father, who had had so much to do with the work of free schools for girls. The latter cleared up his last doubts, and clearly showed the divine vocation which opened before him.

"God's greatest designs on a soul," he said, "are realized only by dint of contradictions. Troubles and afflictions from without and within 'slaughter' nature, but they give strength to the spirit. Just as you cannot get wine from grapes, unless you put them in the wine-press, so a soul brings forth no considerable good until she has been beneath the press of temptations, persecutions, tribulations and afflictions. The perfect Christian should be like the vane on the church's tower; it turns to every wind without ever leaving its post beneath the cross."

### III. SACRIFICE.

Canon de la Salle returned home, and on the feast of St. John the Baptist, the 24th of June, 1681, he took the entire community of schoolmasters into his own house.

This was the crowning-point of his friends' irritation and the world's astonishment. Of his three brothers, who were under his guardianship, two left him. What was worse was the uncertainty he was in as

to how long this new and extraordinary work might last. The teachers themselves, who were good Christians but for the most part without the germs of any high vocation, could not endure the religious regularity now introduced into their little community, and soon, one after the other, all abandoned the work except two. But the Canon hoped on, convinced that the work was of God, and new subjects finally arrived whom he could train up in the right way from the beginning. He lived in their midst as one of them, and was the first to give the example of conformity to the rule.

He had great difficulty in finding a spiritual director for them; but after several fruitless efforts, they unanimously begged him to take the office upon himself. After much natural hesitation—for he was at the same time their temporal superior—he finally accepted.

He was now fully engaged in the great work which Providence had given him to do. The divine vocation was clear; there remained only the sacrifice by which every vocation is accompanied.

Nyel was off as usual on new attempts at foundation, and De la Salle was left alone with his renewed community. A special interposition of Providence, by saving his life, now led him to still greater lengths of devotedness to God and the designs of His grace.

One evening he was returning from some charitable expedition in the country. In a deserted place his horse fell and threw him into a deep pit. The snow was falling, and there was no one passing near. He exhausted himself in his efforts to escape from his dangerous position, but all in vain. At last, after praying earnestly to God, he found himself, he knew not how, again on his road. He barely escaped with his life, and he suffered until death from the effects of the fall. But he saw in the accident a new sign of God's wish that he should devote himself entirely to His service, without thought of the world or human affection. Accordingly, he soon after left his own house altogether, and installed himself with the community of Brothers in a house in the suburbs. It was the feast of his patron St. John Baptist, 1682. Henceforth, he had broken with his past; his life-work, which was now clearly set before him, was to occupy his whole attention.

The renown of his schools soon spread, and pious souls, who had

long desired this remedy for the great evil of the times, hastened to apply for new establishments. Often these were destined to fail, and in such a manner as grievously to wound the natural feelings of the Blessed Founder. But he had only on such occasions to recollect the maxim of the Minim Father who had been his helper: "To reach true humility, we must be very willing not to succeed in those very employments which God has given us for His glory."

Canon de la Salle now began thinking seriously of giving up that position in the world which alone had made it possible for him until then to carry on his work.

The Brothers, on their side, were alarmed for their future. To him—the rich Canon—they said: "Confidence is very easy for you, who have no need of anything. You have a good canonry, the revenue of which is more than doubled by your patrimony. Want will not overtake you, and the failure of the schools would leave you in prosperity. But what would become of us, who have no property of our own, no income and no trade? And how shall we finish our life, or rather our death?"

The Canon felt the truth of this. It was necessary he should cast in his own lot with the community he was founding. Like all the works of God it must be founded in poverty, without this world's help.

He did not hesitate. He at once took advice about resigning his benefice. His confessor, in surprise, ordered him not to think of such a thing. But De la Salle was not satisfied, and went off to Paris to consult his holy Minim once more. The latter had no other lights to communicate to him than those of the Gospel.

"*The foxes have dens, and the birds of the air have nests, and the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.* These are the words of the Gospel, and this is the meaning. The foxes are the children of the world who attach themselves to the good things of the earth. The birds of the heavens are religious who have their cells for their refuge. And the schoolmasters, whose vocation it is to instruct the poor after the example of Jesus Christ, ought to have no other inheritance on earth than that of the Son of man."

This was enough for the Blessed Founder. But now his family, his friends, his colleagues, his superiors, all joined together to prevent him from carrying out his plans. The Archbishop refused to receive his resignation, or even to see him about the matter. At last the superior of the seminary of the diocese—a personage of great credit with the Archbishop—listened to his reasons, and was obliged in Christian faith to approve them. Then the Canon entered the cathedral, and for many hours knelt before the Blessed Sacrament in prayer.

Two persons—witnesses of his preoccupied devotion—spoke one to the other.

“That is Canon de la Salle. You would do well to pray for him, for he has lost his mind.”

“You are right,” replied the other, who was somewhat more versed in the ways of God; “but it is his worldly mind he has lost!”

De la Salle arose, and presented himself once more before the Archbishop. This time he was received. He offered again his resignation. It was accepted in silence. It was made, not in favor of his brother, as had been expected, but of a pious parish priest of the city. The sacrifice was well begun.

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## SECOND PART.

### I. THE FIRM FOUNDATION.

THE great works of God are done by His Saints; and as the life of a Saint is heroic beyond the power of human motives, so the work which God gives the Saints to do is beyond the power of human foresight and human management. Regularly God makes the work take its first root and grow up in the wonderful life of the Saint whom He has charged with it. In this case the Saint, and still less those of the world round about him, will not see what all this strange working is coming to. The world rejects the work; the Saint, if he is truly such, yields himself into the hands of the Holy Spirit.

Lead, kindly Light! one step enough for me.

It was so with Blessed de la Salle in the foundation of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. He had already given up his position as Canon in order to devote himself entirely to this work. Four years passed by before he finished giving up the rich patrimony which still remained to him and which seemed to promise some temporal support for the new community. He lingered and consulted long before he came to a final decision. It seemed natural that he should use his own means for his own work.

But, on the other hand, did not this careful provision for the temporal maintenance of a work which he desired should spread wherever there were poor children to be trained up in the ways of God, betoken rather a local effort of merely human philanthropy? How could zealous souls be found to devote themselves to this self-sacrificing task, if in the first and pattern community all were protected by human means from want or trial? Yet the only need of the work was such self-sacrificing souls, willing to recognize so divine a vocation as the *instructing of many unto justice*, and desirous to earn its crown, which surely is not well-being during their present labors, but *to shine like stars for all eternity*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Daniel, xii. 3.

It had already been remarked that the ex-Canon had lost his mind—at least his worldly mind. But the world was still more astonished when it heard of this final instance of unworldly-mindedness. His family made loud reclamations. They were well provided with worldly goods; but if their wrong-headed relative was to distribute his own fortune at all, surely his charity ought to begin at home and help his own kindred to advance themselves in the world. Even the confessor of the Saint could not understand for a long time his extreme spirit of detachment.

But the advice of the holy Minim Father, who was now dead, had given light to De la Salle, and sooner or later he was sure to follow it. If a great work for the universal Church was to be begun in favor of the Christian education of the children of the people, then God must have care of it, and find for it as it spread all needed temporal support. The private fortune of a citizen of a provincial city like Rheims in France was not to be thought necessary for a moment. And how would the primitive community, to which it belonged to give the tone of confidence in God and self-surrender to His will, do its work properly, if it were provided for in all things?

Meanwhile the little society, under the direction of its holy Founder, was completing the Rules which were definitely to bind it together wherever its branches might be. This they did, not by holding a wise congress on the subject and analyzing out a system for their work. They formed the Rules and Constitutions which still guide the Brothers of the Christian Schools by first *living* them. When in practice they had recognized the will of God in regard to their life in common, then and only then they set it down in writing for future memory.

On the feast of the Ascension, 1684, twelve of De la Salle's principal disciples met together with him. The holy priest announced, to their great joy and admiration, that at last he had given up all things and would henceforth live with them and as one of them. He added: "We will make a retreat; and we will study together the regulations we ought to follow and the means of securing to our society a firm and durable existence."



All were agreed that the time of writing the final Constitutions had not yet come.

“By this means,” said De la Salle, “we shall one day find that there is nothing but the old way in the new rules. Our hearts will find their own work in the book which will be drawn up, and the laws it will contain will appear attractive to you, because you will have been the legislators yourselves.”

At the end of their retreat all pronounced temporary vows of obedience and stability ; and then, with hearts overflowing with piety and love, they went on a pilgrimage to the celebrated sanctuary of Our Lady of Liesse, to offer to the Immaculate Mother their little community.

“I wish,” said the Founder, “that Mary should be the Guide and Queen of our schools.”

Time has proved that the ever Blessed Virgin accepted at his hands the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

The Brothers now began being known by their name, and the costume which they still wear—the black gown hooked in front, with a white cravat, and the large black mantle and ecclesiastical hat—was finally adopted. It was also determined that their food should be of the common kind which even the poor laborers might have at their command, though none of the poor certainly would labor harder than they for their daily bread.

Providence was watching over the work which was just coming into existence, and at the same time over the sanctification of Blessed de la Salle. At the end of this year a cruel famine raged in France, and caused the direst distress in cities and country-places for the two succeeding years. No one could blame him for expending his fortune in so pressing a need. Before the two years were over it was all gone, and he himself—for the sake of his Brothers in the little community—was obliged to go, hat in hand, and ask his share of the public doles of bread given out to the famine-stricken. Now his work was firmly founded, for now at last it rested on the power of God alone.

The Brothers of the Christian Schools were thus fairly in the world, and they had come to stay. They were a valiant troop going forth to educate the children of the people as their profession, not for the tem-

poral gain, but for the love of Jesus Christ Who first had loved the little ones of the flock and had said—*Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.*<sup>2</sup>

It was the Christian organization of popular education, long before the State had thought of occupying itself with this work which it now claims as altogether its own. But these Christian public-schools were the result of that spirit which the Holy Ghost breathes out around the life-work of some of God's Saints; it was not, once again, the outcome of scheming philanthropy.

In such a work it is inevitable that the growth and early trials shall be bound up with the growth in holiness of the Founder himself. This was accordingly the time of the greatest penance of Blessed de la Salle. The work he had embraced was by no means one for which nature had fitted him. The new regulation of his diet was almost beyond his strength. From his childhood he had been nourished with the children of the rich, and the fare of the community with which he had cast in his lot caused him a repugnance that it seemed impossible to vanquish. But for once flesh and blood had met their match. He so starved himself that his rebellious stomach was glad to take whatever was given it. His fasts were at all times frequent; they now seemed to become superhuman. He no longer touched wine, though his native country was noted for the abundance and excellence of its vintage.

He would also be poorer than the very poor. He chose for himself a narrow cell in a corner of the house as his only room. There was not even a chair on which to repose himself; he sat on the edge of a bedstead where the bed-clothes were wanting. The crucifix and beads were the only attempts at decoration; and his entire library consisted of a New Testament, and the *Imitation* or "Following of Christ," which were also the only two books found in the room of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

It was in vain that his acquaintances declared he was becoming a savage. He continued to receive only absolutely necessary visits, and

<sup>2</sup>St. Mark, x. 14.

he applied himself yet more to prayer, which was to be the source of every blessing to his community. Even now, after two hundred years of success, the Christian Brother can find courage and grace for his painful duties only in that union of himself with the will and desires of the Sacred Heart which is found in prayer.

Blessed de la Salle had a great devotion to St. Remigius, the Apostle of the Franks, who lay buried in the cathedral church of his native city. He gained over the sacristan, who left him in the church after nightfall, and there he remained in prayer many Fridays until the morning rose.

Little by little the friends who had most assisted him in the early days of the foundation departed this life, leaving him alone to carry on a work which was really to be his own in its completeness. The Minim Father died, offering to God the sacrifice of not yet having seen his heart's desire—the spread of the new teaching Brothers in the great city of Paris. M. Nyel, the early propagator of the work, died in the city of Rouen, and the benefactress, of whose wonderful conversion to a life of holiness we have spoken, followed after.

But the work was advancing, and with its progress came new tasks for the sainted Founder. He had already felt obliged to open a special school for those country schoolmasters who were to be alone in the performance of their work. The Brothers could not go out one by one consistently with the religious life, and their Founder attempted to provide, as far as lay in his power, for those who should adopt this profession for the sake of the wages paid by the country priests. He thus started what is now known as the system of normal or training schools.

He saw also among the children entrusted to his charge many who needed but a little care and timely aid to develop true vocations for his work. For them he founded the "little novitiate" where "intelligent boys," as he says, "who show dispositions towards piety and purpose entering into the society are brought up. They are admitted from the age of fourteen to sixteen years, and formed to prayer and other exercises of piety." For their education, "their exercises are proportioned to the present capacity of their minds and to that which they will have to do afterwards." In all these regulations it is easy

to discern the enlightened wisdom and prudence of one who was founding a work that should endure. In fact these preparatory novitiates have been adopted into other religious orders and still continue among the Brothers.

## II. FIRST GROWTH.

In a short sketch like the present, it would be impossible to go over the early foundations in country parishes and in the various provincial cities from the north to the south of France. It is enough to give some detailed attention to the work and its trials in Paris.

The first opposition to its genuine character was met with at home. The Archbishop of Rheims, in the human short-sightedness that does not look beyond the limits of a single place or diocese, showed himself desirous of limiting the new Institute to his own jurisdiction. This would at once have destroyed the good to be done throughout the whole Church, vocations would have been narrowed down, and there would have been no probability of the education of the people being taken up so universally as was actually the case by men who came from far and near, to unite in one centralized work. Besides, each separate diocese, in the intention of the Founder, will always profit by this more general diffusion of the work, as precious vocations, not from its own narrow limits, will often be at its service, according to the wise discretion of the superiors. It would naturally be for the interest so dear to their hearts that every diocese should have its share in the men and resources at their command. This union would also be the only safeguard of the primitive spirit and fervor of religious discipline.

Blessed de la Salle had received an important part of his own spiritual formation at the hands of the Sulpicians. It was in their parish his congregation of Brothers was to make its entry into the great world. The immense parish of St. Sulpice was filled with religious houses of different descriptions founded for the most varied purposes. But around their extensive grounds were many scattered streets which had become the place of sojourn of a rude population almost beyond the reach of law.

The Saints had passed that way before. St. Vincent de Paul gave



there one of his most successful missions, and the most hardened sinners had been converted. A year later the Venerable M. Olier—the founder of the Sulpicians—accepted the care of the parish, and his successors had succeeded in fairly regenerating it. But the schools, on which the permanence of the whole work depended, were not in a satisfactory condition. It is true there was an organization with suitable supervision. But in the Church of God, almost invariably, Christian works are carried on by something more than human calculation and supervision. These works are the special office of religious communities which live on from age to age, with a settled rule to guide them in their efforts.

For every work at all supernatural the one thing necessary is a body of Christians devoted to it and trained to supernatural motives and ways of action. No amount of exterior regulation would ever make a single Christian Brother, if the interior spirit were wanting; and it is precisely the office of the religious rule and the strongly centralized union of superiors with their subjects which secure this religious and interior spirit.

In 1652 the parish had been divided into seven quarters, each having its own school. But in 1688, when De la Salle was called to Paris, only one was remaining, next to the house occupied by the priests of the parish. It gathered together a few over two hundred children, under the care of an inexperienced secular teacher with the supervision of one of the curates.

In February, 1688, De la Salle set out for Paris accompanied by the two Brothers who were to take charge of the schools of St. Sulpice. There was serious work before them—to bring order out of the chaos existing in the instruction of the children of one of the chief parishes of Christendom. The children were divided into separate classes according to their previous instruction, and each master was assigned a definite post. The different classes were held in separate rooms, the hours of opening and closing of school were fixed, and each day the children were taken to Mass and catechism was regularly taught. It would be strange that in a Christian education the Christian religion should have no part.

The parish priest was highly pleased with the order and the admirable efficiency of his new school, and boys came in from every part. Soon one of the Brothers fell ill overburdened by his work. De la Salle, who had until now occupied himself with the supervision of everything, at once took the class thus left without a teacher.

But all difficulty was not at an end. On the contrary it was just beginning. Three persons were dissatisfied with the new state of things. The priest who had formerly held full sway over the instruction of these children could not bear to see that another in a short time had produced fruits which he himself had so long been unable to obtain. The young schoolmaster who had had the entire teaching of the two hundred boys now found himself with a smaller number, it is true, but bound down to observe certain hours and a fixed method; this did not please his taste for independence. The third was the woollen manufacturer to whom, under pretence of manual labor, all the boys of the school had been sent for several hours each day. De la Salle still allowed this, but he regulated the time within proper limits and would not suffer, as in the past, that the boys should be kept from their studies by press of work in the factory. Hence the manufacturer suffered a considerable loss, and taking past usage as his right complained seriously of the injustice done him.

All this was of little importance, so long as the parish priest did not interest himself against the new order of things. But it is said that every heresy has had its grandmother, and the ease is pretty much the same with all church troubles. The three malecontents managed to find influential ladies of the parish to side with them, and the latter succeeded in so predisposing the mind of the parish priest against the holy Founder that an order was given to De la Salle to betake himself and his Brothers back home to Rheims.

However unjust the command, De la Salle did not dream of disputing it or of defending himself. When he was ready for his departure he came to the Curé to bid him farewell. The latter was struck with the noble humility of this priest who, for the sake of instructing children, had given up a much higher worldly position than his own. He suddenly changed his mind and said almost imploringly: "Oh, do not

go away! Keep the direction of our school, and do not deprive my parish of the aid it is only beginning to receive from your zeal and experience." Then, as if to keep up an appearance of consistency, he added: "I will think later on about your going away."

His chief assistant in the parish, who was altogether on the side of the Brothers, shortly after assured De la Salle: "The Curé has just been talking with me about you. He has told you that he will think later on about your departure. Now he will think full three years before he speaks to you about it again. So be at rest about the matter for the future."

A worldly mind would have resented greatly this sudden change, but the humility of the holy Founder did not vary; he had indeed lost his worldly mind. He took up again his work, and it went on giving more and more satisfaction every day.

Two years later it was necessary to open a new school in another part of the immense parish, and then new trouble arose. This time it was from the professional schoolmasters, who saw in these new establishments—more efficient than their own and yet quite free to all—the death of their own pay schools. The latter were wretched affairs and gave the masters but a moderate support. Hence their alarm at the sight of these new methods far more successful than their own, where a few scholars were taught painfully one by one and not many together in well graded classes as with the Brothers. These new schools, also, being free, were under the administration of the parish priests, and so might hope to escape the odious interference of the state officers. The latter, however, found means to carry on a lawsuit against the Brothers, on the ground that they received in their schools the sons of persons able to pay for their children's schooling.

This was not the last time Blessed de la Salle saw his work in danger from the same quarter. He now led his Brothers in pilgrimage to the famous shrine of Our Lady of Virtues, and quite unexpectedly the first sentence, which had been against him, was reversed and his schools were left for a short time in peace. But for fifteen years the schoolmasters from time to time renewed their annoyances, going so far on one occasion as to break into the classes and seize all the furniture and



books. Yet this difficulty was sure to be overcome in the long run, for the great mass of the people was Catholic and their Catholic instinct was on the side of the free Christian Schools.

Other difficulties, as vexatious and in reality more dangerous to the continued existence of the work, came from the part of those who would naturally have been considered its chief protectors.

The new Curé of the parish of St. Sulpice did not like the costume of the Brothers, which attracted attention in the street. Some said that the cloak was too short and others that the hat was too broad, besides being altogether ugly. The Curé heard all these complaints and declared that this novel costume must go.

The Blessed Founder was humble, and he knew how to give way when it was for God's glory. But God, in calling him to found a great work, had also given him the stout heart of a true founder. It was necessary that the new work should stand forth in the world for what it was—a religious society of Brothers charged with the teaching of the Christian schools. As such they should be known, even outwardly. If their costume was novel, so was their work; and the long ecclesiastical mantle and hat, which it was proposed to substitute, would confound them with the clergy, whereas their vocation required that they should not go on to Holy Orders.

The Curé did not conceal his discontent with what he called the hard-headedness of De la Salle, and he withdrew a large part of the aid he had previously given to the new schools. He did not think that, in addition to the excellent reasons the holy Founder had given him, his own successor might have other ideas and be equally resolute in enforcing them, so that the poor Brothers in the course of a century might be dressed out in a dozen different fashions.

All this showed once more the necessity of an interior and independent government for the society, just as the previous abortive attempt to render it merely diocesan and local had done. In both cases Providence knew how to carry out Its own designs in spite of this opposition on the part of good men—the opposition which is always the hardest to bear.



BLESSED DE LA SALLE.

*(After authentic portrait.)*

### III. THE YEARS OF TRIAL.

Overwork and sorrow had now so wrought on the already overtaxed strength of De la Salle that he fell sick unto death. His aged grandmother came to see him, but refusing her admission to his room he had himself dressed and carried to the parlor. When she reproached him for this uncalled for severity, he reminded her that he was not his own but bound to give in all things an example of regularity to his Brothers in religion; and what religious life could there be unless there was some provision made for the cloister which removes them from the world? The holy Founder recovered, but long after, when

on his deathbed, he came back on the necessity of separating the Brothers from the world and its spirit.

Along with the life of His servant God was slowly building up the Institute which he was to leave after him. De la Salle had long desired to find a Superior for the entire congregation among the Brothers themselves. For this purpose he had put at their head in Paris one of the most intelligent and pious of their number. This was Brother L'Heureux, whom he designed raising to the priesthood. But he had proposed as man, while God was disposing. After his recovery he went to Rheims, where he received a letter apprising him of the sudden illness of the Brother on whom he had built such hopes. Hastening back, he found his intended successor already two days in the tomb. He saw in this the hand of God; and henceforth it became a rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, not only that none among themselves should ever take Orders, but also that no one already a priest should ever be admitted to their number. Time has shown the divine wisdom of this rule; besides the divisions and jealousies which would be sure to arise, there would be too many avenues open to occupations less self-denying than the work of teaching young boys.

Great trials, however, still awaited the new community. A house of novitiate had been opened in Paris, and here on days of vacation the Brothers, worn and wearied from their constant labors in the schools, came to take repose by following for a day the rule of silence and prayer of the young novices. To De la Salle this was a paradise on earth, and the religious spirit of the community grew strong and vigorous. The Brothers were careful, however, to refuse to listen to his entreaties that they should choose a new Superior among themselves. The twelve oldest of their number were admitted to the vows of obedience and stability in the new society, according to the purpose for which God had called them together; but the final Constitutions had not yet been written.

In the year 1698—ten years after the entrance of the Christian Brothers into the parish—the schools of St. Sulpice had grown from a single large hall filled with a disorderly crowd of two hundred boys, largely occupied in the neighboring woollen factory instead of at their



studies, to fourteen classes with over one thousand students ! To these had been added large Sunday schools, where for three hours an opportunity was afforded to those occupied during the week to learn useful things, from the alphabet up to practical commercial calculations and mechanical design and surveying. Blessed de la Salle himself afterwards founded a separate boarding-school for the commercial and liberal education, and at the request of King Louis XIV. he took charge of the training of fifty young Irish students who had followed James II. of England into exile. Still later he accepted the charge of a House of Correction. The Christian Brothers since his time, as occasion has demanded, have cheerfully charged themselves with like works in addition to their prime labor of teaching the free Christian schools of the Church in all parts of the world.

But at this time the period of religious storms was rapidly advancing over unfortunate France ; the Jansenist dissensions were beginning. He who signed himself " John Baptist de la Salle, Roman priest," was not likely to be led away from the side of the Holy See. In fact, his little congregation formed, until the Revolution, a compact body of great popular power against the new spirit. This is all the more striking as Canon Louis de la Salle, the brother of the Founder, became for a time a leader in the anti-papal party. Here was again the hand of God guiding those whom He had gathered together for the salvation of the little ones of His flock. To this day their schools are centres of frequent Communion—that bulwark of practical Christianity, which Jansenism did so much to break down ; and the part they have taken in the great League of the Sacred Heart, called the Apostleship of Prayer, shows the continuance of the spirit of their Founder.

But at this time general alarm and disquiet were felt in regard to quietism and false systems of prayer and piety. Complaints, partially founded in the conduct of the Brother Director of the schools in Paris, concerning the excessive penances practised in the community, reached the ears of the Archbishop. He at once appointed one of his vicars-general to examine into the matter, and for a month together the Brothers were cross-examined every week, under obligation of conscience in regard to the conduct of their Founder. Nothing was

learned unfavorable in the slightest degree to the holiness or the discretion of De la Salle, but prejudice had done its work, and he was abruptly informed that he was no longer to consider himself superior of the community which owed its entire existence to his labors.

He submitted without a word and was present with the Brothers in the large hall of the community, when the newly-appointed superior—an unknown ecclesiastic—arrived.

The Brothers had not been informed of the intended change and were thunderstruck when it was announced. With one voice they declared that they already had their own superior and were resolved to receive no other; and they appealed to the Archbishop in person. The latter, indeed, had the right to dissolve their houses in his diocese, since they had as yet no other approbation than his own, but he could not in justice impose on these men, gathered together of their own free will for a common purpose, a superior totally unknown to them and strange to their work and its spirit.

The Founder himself was not able to obtain their consent to the change, and at last, after much painful suffering on his part, the affair was allowed to drop, and he remained in charge of the society which had grown up with himself. This was perhaps the last and the most serious of the combats which the new society was forced to wage, however unwillingly, with the local authorities. It was not till after the death of the Founder that its final approbation was obtained from Rome, but it was already recognized as a religious congregation having its own spirit and its own work to do, and not to be lightly tampered with by the caprice or merely human judgments of men.

Some years later another attempt to destroy the central character of the Institute was made. Powerful influences were at work to have an outside priest as superior in each house, to bind the Brothers of each separate community not to pass from one house to another, and, in fact, to make each community independent of all the others. This was to destroy the whole plan of De la Salle, and, as we can now see, to render miserably inefficient the work his children might do in the world. God did not allow it; and we still have in His Church the strongly organized and living religious congregation of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

**IV. THE DEATH OF THE SAINT.**

¶ The holy Founder had long wished to see a Brother at the head of his Society, and this wish was now granted. Brother Bartholomew was elected his successor, and the regular course of an established religious congregation began.

De la Salle with great joy made himself henceforward the least in the community. He visited the House of Correction, from which unlikely place he sent vocations to the cloister; he heard confessions and catechised in the boarding school; he prayed and fasted. "Make haste, my God! I desire Thee," was ever on his lips.

The year 1719 began, and at the approach of Lent the Brothers protested against his observing the rigid fast, from which his age exempted him. But it was only when the order of obedience was given him that he could be persuaded. Soon after he met with a painful accident, receiving a violent blow on the head. The physician who was called declared there was no hope of cure.

"Ah! happy tidings, which I have been waiting for daily!" said the holy man.

However, when the doctor of the body suspended his treatment, a higher Physician suddenly restored for a time the strength of the Blessed Founder. For two weeks he was again at his occupations. Then he fell ill again and thought to die on the feast of his beloved protector, St. Joseph. On the contrary, on that day he was able to say Mass; but it was for the last time.

In the beginning of Holy Week a new trial broke over him. The parish priest desired to have all the Brothers and their pupils assist at the solemn ceremonies in his own church. De la Salle refused this, which would have been a dangerous precedent for the community; and the incensed Curé succeeded in having all his powers as a priest withdrawn by the Bishop. On the following day he paid the Founder a visit, to see if he was any more inclined to give him satisfaction. He also expected some natural resentment. But he was disconcerted by the calm smile of the old man who had long since resigned himself to all earth's troubles.

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"At least," said the Curé within himself, "he must feel some trouble at the thought of the near approach of death." So he said aloud: "Take heed, you are about to die, and then you will have to appear before God." De la Salle replied simply: "I know it, and I am submissive to His orders. My lot is in His hands. May His will be done!"

The Curé was much touched, and expressed his lively regret for what had happened. "Only what God wishes happens to me," said the other comforting him.

Then he asked the Curé to bring him the holy Viaticum. This was done on the following day, until which time he remained rapt in prayer. When the procession came near he got down from his bed on his knees to receive his God in the Blessed Eucharist. On Holy Thursday he had Extreme Unction and gave his last recommendations to the Brothers.

"Dear Brothers, if you wish to keep yourselves in your state of life and to die in it, never have any intercourse with the people of the world; for little by little you will learn to like their ways of acting, and you will so engage yourselves in their conversations that, through policy, you will be unable to keep yourselves from applauding their discourse, however dangerous. This will be the cause of your falling into unfaithfulness, and when no longer faithful in observing your Rules, you will become disgusted with your condition and at last you will abandon it."

At two in the morning Brother Bartholomew spoke to him of the Blessed Virgin. He brightened at that loved name.

"Do you not accept with joy all your sufferings?" asked the Brother.

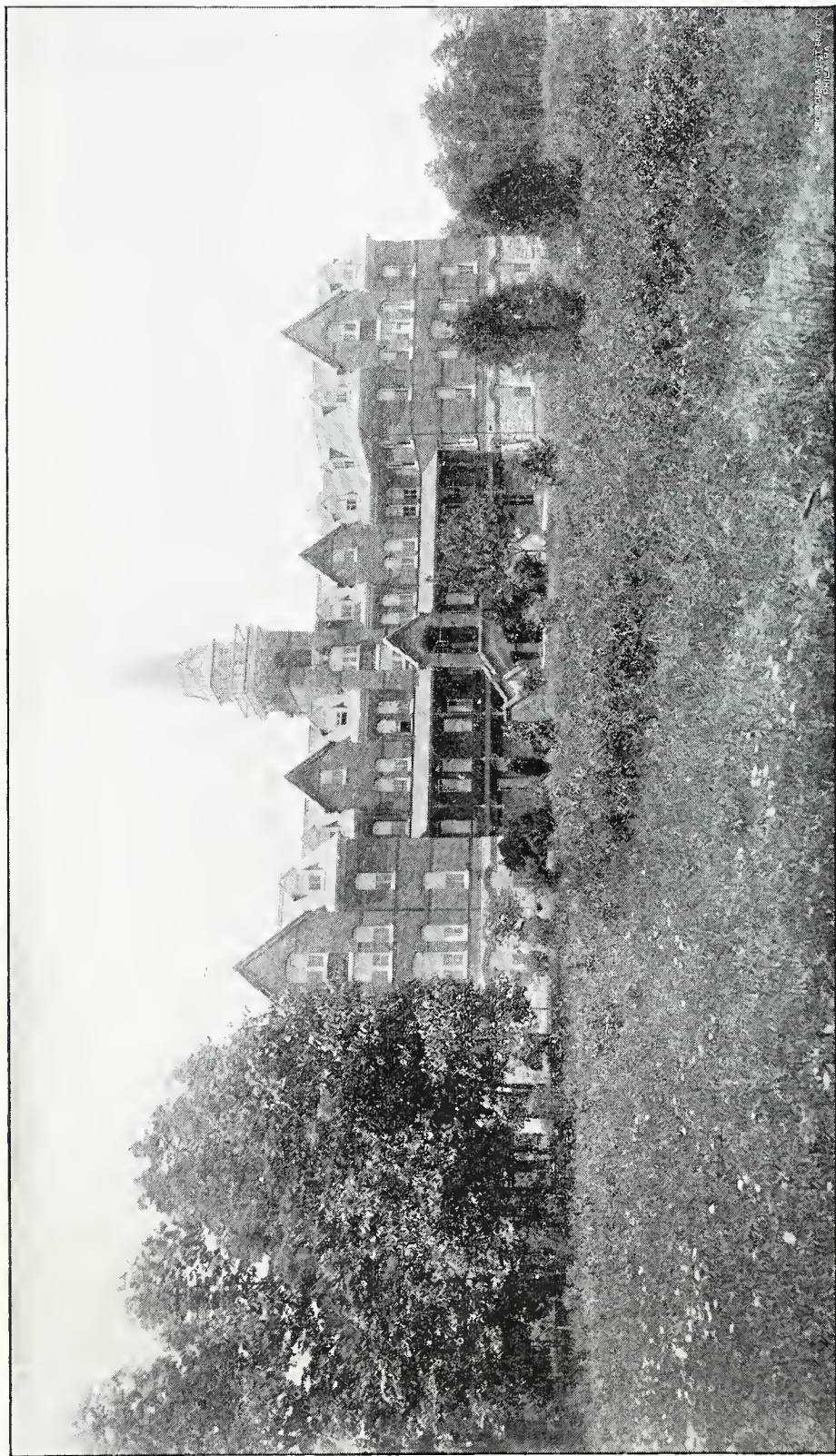
"Yes, in all things I adore God's conduct toward me," answered the dying Saint. They were his last words.

In the early morning, after a severe agony, he joined his hands as in prayer and breathed his last. The day was doubly devoted to the Sacred Heart—it was the First Friday of the month and also Good Friday, the 7th day of April, 1719. He was sixty-eight years old.

As he was borne to the tomb, all the people cried out—"The Saint is dead!" The Church has now ratified their opinion of his holiness.







NOVITIATE, AMMENDALE, MARYLAND.

# INSTITUTE

OF THE

## BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS.

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### PROSPECTUS OF THE NOVITIATE.

**T**HE Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is a religious congregation, the object of which is the sanctification of its members and the Christian education of youth, especially the poor.

This Institute was founded in 1680 by the Blessed John Baptist de la Salle, and it was approved as a religious congregation by our Holy Father Benedict XIII. in the Bull, *IN APOSTOLICÆ DIGNITATIS SOLIO*, given on the 7th day of the calends of February, in the year of the Incarnation, 1724 (January 25th, 1725).

The establishments conducted by the Brothers of the Christian Schools comprise gratuitous schools, orphanages, reformatories, art and agricultural schools; also academies, colleges and normal schools for lay-teachers.

From sixteen to twenty-five is the most appropriate age for the admission of candidates. Educated men can be admitted at a more advanced age.

Boys of about fourteen are admitted in the Preparatory Novitiates to test their vocations.

The qualities indispensably required in those who apply for admission are: 1st. Good health and fair appearance. 2d. A sound judgment, with the ability to make the required studies. 3d. Good character, control of temper, a docile and sociable disposition, detachment from worldly goods and interests, zeal for the glory of God, for the salvation of children, and one's own perfection.

The principal impediments to the admission of candidates are: Illegitimacy; bad reputation of the family; necessity of providing for parents; any grave and apparent deformity, deafness, or bad sight;



inability to pay debts contracted personally; obligation to discharge the duty of guardian, or the management of property; condemnation by civil authority for some misdemeanor.

The time of probation is two years: the first in the Novitiate, the second either in the scholasticate, school, or in any other position assigned.

A candidate who is at least eighteen years of age, and who during his trial of two years has given satisfaction, may be admitted to annual vows.

Those only are admitted to triennial and perpetual vows whose application to duty and observance of Rule entitle them to that favor.

Every candidate is required, on entering the Novitiate, to bring with him the following papers: 1st. A letter of recommendation from his pastor. 2d. His Baptismal certificate. 3d. The consent, in writing, of his parents, if he is a minor.

The late tireless champion of the Church and her rights, Mgr. de Ségur, could not be silent on such a subject: "Let us," he exclaims, "again say what we have so often urged; never has the harvest been greater; never have the Brothers been called upon to open so many establishments; never has it been within the power of the priest to encourage the work of securing vocations to greater advantage."

Particulars may be obtained at any of the establishments of the Institute. Application can also be made to the Brother Visitor of the district or to the Brother Director of the Novitiate.

Novitiates of the Institute have been established in this country in New York, St. Louis, San Francisco and Ammendale, Prince George's County, Maryland (near Baltimore).

#### **PREPARATORY NOVITIATE.**

The Preparatory Novitiates are schools annexed to our Novitiates, in which boys of about fourteen years of age, who wish to embrace the religious life, are received, and wherein the course of studies and religious exercises are suited to their age.

Those boys only whose conduct gives signs of vocation can be admitted to the Novitiate. Arrangements for their board are made

with their parents or guardians. The other conditions are the same as those for postulants to the Novitiate.

All extra expenses are charged to parents until the candidates enter the Novitiate.

**NOTE.**

According to the statistics of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, taken December 31, 1887, the Brothers are to be found in every quarter of the globe.

Total number of Brothers, . . . . .	11,969	} 15,248
“ “ Novices, . . . . .	3,279	

Total number of American Brothers, . .	1,089	} 1,355
“ “ “ Novices, . .	266	

Total number of schools, . . . . .	1,651
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The Brothers teach nearly 400,000 pupils, of whom 23,381 are boarders.

This year the Brothers have over 60,000 boys preparing for First Communion and Confirmation.

Glorious indeed is the mission of the Christian Brothers. To quote the words of their Blessed Founder: “They are co-workers with Christ in saving souls.” Happy those who are called to this holy life, who are blessed with so exalted a vocation. Here is a timely place to address a few words to the young, ardent, and zealous souls who only need the way opened to them eagerly to walk therein. Do not your hearts lean toward a state whose work is to sculpture living angels from out the block of human nature, presented by every child who enters a Christian School? Can you imagine a cause more worthy of your highest ambition than to raise up for God and society a Christian offspring, which “can only be secured by a Christian education?” Remember that “Christian virtues do not grow spontaneously in the soul. They are the result of careful and constant culture; and this must begin early in childhood.” Can you, dear youth, ask any grander field in which to labor? What more lasting source of gratitude can you offer the world, society at large, than that which you would be entitled to claim by joining a body to whom is confided the “wonderful



privilege of training immortal souls to fulfil the duties assigned them by their Heavenly Father, that they may receive from His hands an eternal crown in heaven?" In such a calling, it will be yours to take the same care of children "that a skilful gardener would take of delicate flowers which he knows are highly prized by his master." If it becomes the imperative duty of parents "to send their children to Christian Schools," surely it must be the imperative duty of others to take upon themselves the task of governing and teaching these pupils. "The question of religious education is the paramount question of the day, in the solution of which, our destiny as a Christian people must depend;" so declare the highest authorities in the Catholic Church in our land. Is there anything which you, youthful reader, can imagine as higher or more ennobling than to pursue a vocation which tends to realize the hopes and wishes, the prayers and commands of prelates alike distinguished for their piety, learning and zeal? Think for a moment, what it is to take part in opening and maintaining Christian Schools, whose mission is pointed out so forcibly by the same high authority: "The Catholic school is the good seed in the hearts of children, to bear in after years glorious fruits for our country and our religion. . . ." In these schools children will learn all that will make them hereafter loyal citizens of their country, and valiant soldiers of Christ and His Holy Church. By these schools the efforts of infidelity will be rendered abortive; by them will religion be fortified; by them will your pastors be able to repeat the touching words of the Divine Master: *Father, those whom Thou gavest me I have kept, and not one of them is lost.*

In so important a question as that of religious vocation, it is of the greatest moment to understand the subject more fully, and earnestly to pray God to give us strength to follow when He makes known His divine will. Do not allow human motives, family interests, to interfere. Cast worldly hopes and prospects aside. Compare the perishable present with the eternal future. Bring to mind the terrible punishments inflicted on those who do not obey God. Strive to form an exact idea of the secular state, with all its trials, dangers, and transitory rewards and gratifications. Then form an equally exact idea of the religious state. Study and strive to appreciate the nine fruits of the religious

life attributed to St. Bernard, and in which that great Doctor and Saint of the Church shows how man in holy religion :

1. Lives more pure ; 2. Falls more rarely ; 3. Rises more promptly ; 4. Is bedewed by the waters of grace more frequently ; 5. Passes his life more holily ; 6. Reposes more securely ; 7. Dies more confidently ; 8. Is released more promptly ; 9. Is rewarded more abundantly.

Such considerations will make you feel the beauty, the loveliness, the worth of a religious state. Bear in mind, youthful reader, it is not a question of greater or lesser good, it is one of salvation. Without following your vocation, there is a *possibility*, but only a possibility of salvation.

The world hungers for the bread of life ; children in multitudes ask for teachers who will feed them with the saving doctrines of Mother Church. Who, called by the Divine voice, can refuse ? Who, with heart beating responsively to the higher and nobler aspirations of Christian heroism, will say “No !” when called upon by the Almighty in words which conscience hears and heart feels, to labor in that grand field, the noblest, the highest, the most acceptable to Mother Church, and therefore to God, the work of Christian education, the great question of the hour.

Stay, youthful reader, before going further in your reading ; offer up a fervent prayer to know whether such is *your* calling ; and if this be the case, thank the good God ; praise Mary Immaculate through whom this grace has been given you ; and, when, in the happy moment of the accomplishment of your vocation, you are vested in the habit of the Brother of the Christian Schools, say, “ ‘ To God, from whom all blessings flow, be praise ! ’ Thanks be to Mary, who has led me to the foot of the altar of sacrifice, where I can best secure the interests of Jesus, the Saviour of men ; grateful offerings be made to my dear Angel Guardian, who ‘ from unrighteous ways hath saved me, lest in error’s path I stray. ’ ”

Yes, dear youth, such a vocation is one which will give heaven cause to rejoice, not that one sinner has been converted, but that there has been joined to the army of Christian teachers another worker, who will not only teach and direct the ninety-nine who need not penance, but also save the hundredth who has fallen away.

Does not such a mission inspire you? Can you think of the good to be done and yet remain callous? No; such is not the character of the truly Catholic Christian boy. His is a noble disposition, a willing heart, a generous soul—such is yours, youthful reader, if, called by the good God, you put your hand generously to the plough and never turn back, thus proving yourself “worthy of the kingdom of heaven.”

What more glorious task? for two hundred and more years thousands of Brothers of the Christian Schools have devoted themselves to the cause of Christian education. In all that time heaven has been peopled by the souls saved through Christian, religious teaching. Now is the day, now the hour, when more gleaners are called into the vineyard, where “the harvest is great, the laborers few.” Will you listen to the voice of grace, the call of God? If so, blessed indeed is your lot, for “of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

You may hear it said, “It is as well to remain in the world as to enter religion.” To this St. Liguori answers: “People of the world make no scruple of telling young persons called to the religious life that they can serve God in every state, even in the midst of the world. Yes, it is quite true that we can serve God in every place, when we are not called to the religious state; but not when we are called, and we wish to please our own fancy by remaining in the world. In this latter case it is difficult to live well and to serve God.” (See “Choice of a State of Life.”)

#### **WHO SHOULD ENCOURAGE, DEVELOP, AND FOSTER RELIGIOUS VOCATIONS?**

Every *family*, but, especially every *mother*, every *father*, every *priest*, every *teacher*, and finally every *Christian*, zealous for God’s glory and the salvation of souls.

Every Catholic mother should be delighted to offer at least one of her sons as an apostle in a work so dear to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, so prized by Holy Mother Church, and so essential to the welfare of society. A son thus consecrated to what is noblest on earth—the Christian education of youth, will be the brightest gem in her crown of glory. Well may she rejoice in the exceeding favor that has been shown her in being the mother of a son so signally blessed. And the

Christian father! Should it not be to him the richest reward for his toils and cares that his son is called to so holy a life? Nothing grieves the heart of a good father more than to see his son going astray, and nothing then should delight him more than to see him devoting his whole life to the service of God and his neighbor in the religious state. Such a father may consider himself thrice blessed.

And the Reverend Clergy, first in every good cause, shall they not give a helping hand, speak an encouraging word, where the germs of a vocation appear, or indications lead them to suspect its existence? Who better than the priest knows the value of the religious school; the importance of having teachers whose whole lives are exclusively devoted to so noble a cause? But we will not urge the question with these devoted ministers of Christ. The words of their own Most Reverend and Right Reverend prelates will be the fittest form of appeal.

*Extract from the sermon of Right Rev. JOHN J. KEANE, Bishop of Richmond, delivered in the New York Cathedral during the Triduum in honor of Blessed John Baptist de la Salle.*

“God bless the Brothers of the Christian Schools, and God bless all the other teaching Orders that are united with them in bestowing upon our country the priceless treasure of Christian education. They are benefactors of their country and their race, and well does the Church of God in this time, when the ideas of darkness are struggling to mislead the world, encourage their work. And well does the Church of God by the beatification of the founder of this community which has done so much for Christian education; well does the Church by that act elevate before all men the banner on which is inscribed ‘Christian Education’ and hold that banner high. And may the blessing of God make all those who have the honor of carrying that banner before the eyes of the country worthy of their work, worthy of their blessed dignity, which the Providence of God has bestowed upon them. In the words just chanted by the Right Reverend celebrant of the Mass, ‘May God bless all those who are engaged in giving Christian education to the youth of our country!’ And may the spirit of God which has done this much for Christian education, pour into the hearts of



many a young man in our country the desire to have a share in such a work! Why are our teaching orders not more numerously filled? Why is it that the young men of our country have so low an ambition that they are content to be engaged with mere material interests when they might have the privilege of sharing so glorious a Christian work as this? From the depths of my heart I pray that the vocation of the Brothers of the Christian schools, and all other teaching orders, may be multiplied tenfold in our country. I have said repeatedly that

*I am really more solicitous*

for the multiplication of the teaching Orders than for the multiplication of the priesthood; for education is to-day the great work that the Church has in hand. I thank God for the privilege granted me personally this morning of speaking these words. It is one of the things I am thankful for in my life that I am one of the boys of the Christian Brothers. All my elementary education I received in St. Vincent's school and Calvert Hall in Baltimore, and as a boy of the Christian Brothers I have the privilege to-day of paying a tribute to their glorious founder."





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